

Vows

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Summary: A little 00Q. Because I adore them so. Just a little bit of sassy fun, courtesy of James and Q, to take the mind off things. For reference, 008 looks like Tom Hiddleston, 004 like a young Monica Bellucci.

1. To Have & To Hold

He'd only been in the job two weeks.

Two bloody weeks and already he was required to attend a social event. A wedding.

"I imagine it's not really your kind of thing."

"You imagine correctly."

Q and Tanner were in the Chief of Staff's office for a meeting regarding reshuffling some of the Q branch minions with a view to developing their existing skillsets. Q took a sip from his mug of tea.

"Is it normal?" Q asked, looking over the rim of his mug. "I mean, a gathering of SIS employees in one place might garner attention from unwanted quarters."

Tanner waved his hand dismissively. "Oh it's all locked down tighter than a nun's knickers, Q."

Q chuckled. He may not be the most social human in River House or in all of London for that matter, but he liked Tanner. The man understood people and wasn't at all flaunting about it.

"Henson's very well liked amongst the staff. Though the shoes she had to fill had to be fumigated when her predecessor moved to MI5 so she's practically treated like a rock star," Tanner said with a

smile.

Q stood then. "I'm sure it will be an affair to remember."

Tanner rose to show him to the door. "Births, Deaths and Marriages. Aren't they always? Plus it'll give you an opportunity to meet some staff from other departments and the Double-Os of course, on a moreâ€ relaxed footing." As if anything involving agents that carried a Licence to Kill could be considered relaxing, Q thought to himself.

Tanner can tell Q's smile is a little strained. "If I mustâ€|" He paused to look back at Tanner then. "Don't suppose there's a chance I could just Skype in on the ceremony?"

The Chief of Staff adopted his Chief-Of-Staff Look.

"Right. Thought not. Worth a shot," mumbled Q shutting the door behind him.

* * *

><p>It wasn't nearly as much the ordeal Q had thought it might be.<p>

At least the ceremony was fine. It's the mingling after the fact that's such a godawful chore. Still. Needs must. But there was no need to steal the brides' thunder. Though to be fair, she didn't seem particularly bothered.

Having familiarised himself with the agents of the Double-O division's files, it's not as though Q should be surprised that they knew how to make an entrance with as much aplomb as knew how to appear out of thin air to dispose of a mark with the ease of tossing aside a used napkin. Even a blushing bride, donned in a suitably clingy-in-all-the-right-places silk gown, couldn't provide sufficient distraction, especially when she herself became distracted by said entrance.

"James! You came!" the bride, Felicity Shoals formerly Henson, gushed.

James Bond - 007, Licence to Kill, was standing at the entrance to the room with whom Q recognised as 004 hanging off his arm. Q hadn't been aware he had been staring until a soft voice next to him shook him out of his vacancy.

"You know, he doesn't actually mean to look so devastatingly gorgeous. He was just born that way."

Q started and looked back over his shoulder at the owner of the voice.

008 - Lucas Hemmings - was gazing at him. And while Q had usually avoided social interaction with all the vigour of an agoraphobe dodging open spaces, he knew an appreciative gaze when he saw one. His avoidance of social niceties wasn't in fact because he was anti-social by nature. He was simply so keyed into the needs of others that sometimes it became overwhelming, blindsiding him unless he was prepared for it. Computers and coding were safer. The

impersonal mathematical nature of that world gave him everything he needed and asked for nothing in return.

A slow, easy smile broke over Hemmings' countenance. "You must be our new Quartermaster."

Q turned bodily around to greet the man. "008. It's a pleasure to meet you," he said, a little too primly perhaps.

"The pleasure's all mine. Q," he replied, extending his own hand in return. Q vaguely wondered if the Double-Os ever turned it off. He knew full well he was being assessed, appraised, catalogued and filed away for future reference. Still, he stood unabashed beneath the scrutinising probing look of the agent. Wouldn't do to betray any uneasiness, no matter how intimidating they appeared to be.

"You're muchâ€| younger than I expected," he said, though his tone was far from disapproving.

"Looks can be deceptive, 008. Though I'm sure in your line of work you are more than well aware of that fact." Q leaned forward with a slight smile, well accustomed to the sentiments passed on his youthful appearance. "Besides, these days, age is no guarantee of efficiencyâ€|"

"And youth is no guarantee of innovation," a deep voice sounded behind him, countering his comment. Q turned around to be faced with 007 and 004. Wonderful. Practically surrounded by the deadliest weapons in the arsenal of the SIS. He almost subconsciously reached around to pat his own arse to make sure none of his staff had surreptitiously tagged a post-it with the words "NEW BOY" in large, neon letters to it.

007 kept a level, deep blue gaze on Q while 004 greeted 008. "Hemmings. Glad to see you made it back from Afghanistan in one piece."

"Knowing the sight of you waited me back in London, Clare, was all the incentive I required," he replied smoothly, kissing the back of her hand.

"Charmer. You're making me blush," she said, feigning coyness.

Bond, feeling mischievous, unhesitatingly tested the waters. He allowed his gaze to roam Q's slight frame from stylish sneakers to the unruly mop of waves seemingly balanced precariously on his head. "I see that MI6 has established a new cradle-snatching policy while I was away," he said coolly.

There was no doubt in his mind that 007 knew exactly whom he was addressing. He regarded the agent with an equally measured look of coolness in return. "Yes. M thought it a good idea to even out the average age of SIS employees. You know, in case the Department of Health mistakenly pegged the building for a retirement home."

Hemmings couldn't suppress the laugh while 004 raised an eyebrow at the brazenness of the youth in the face of three of the Division's deadliest assassins. "I think you're going to do just fine here, Q," Hemmings said good-naturedly, clapping him on the back while passing

him one of the two glasses of Scotch he'd just ordered from the bar behind them.

Despite himself, James was feeling particularly enamoured by the sassy Head of Q-Branch. He smiled inwardly as he observed the new boy, not quite comfortable but adapting to his environment. Besides, a little bit of extra-curricular activity never went amiss. As he watched Q glance his way over the rim of those nerdy spectacles, he could see the challenge in his eyes. Raising his tumbler to his lips, Bond found himself wondering if that mouth tasted as brazen as it sounded. He silently made a promise to himself in that moment that he would do whatever it took to find out.

2. In Sickness & In Health: Part I

Q watched the dot that was Lucas Hemmings' signal pulse on his work station screen.

"008. Are you still with us?" queried Q, matter-of-factly.

A few beats of silence welcomed the question before Hemmings apparently retrieved his earpiece. "Thanks to you, Q. I am," he breathed, the appreciation evident in his voice. "Surely now I owe you dinner?"

"You owe me nothing, 008. I am merely fulfilling my duty by keeping you alive long enough to fulfil yours."

"What does an agent have to doâ€|?" he asked, his breath now evened out.

"An agent, need I remind you 008, has to respect the professional boundaries put in place to avoid the complications that come withâ€| personal entanglements," replied Q levelly, zoning in on 005's coordinates to ensure he was heading the direction in which he was supposed to be heading. "Didn't you go to Eton, man? Did they not teach you Boundaries 101?"

"Well, I knew several Professors who were vastly familiar with blurring boundaries. You being my superior, Q, I'd be more than willing to let you take advantage of me if you considered my boundaries worth blurring."

Q smiled. He loved the banter and like 007, Hemmings was particularly entertaining.

"I have to admit, you are somewhat more civilised than your colleague. More stealth than supernova."

"Supernova?" asked Hemmings.

"You did hear what he managed to do in Bolivia, 008. He does have a penchant for pyrotechnics that would put some cosmological events to shame," replied Q, garnering a chiming laugh across the ether between them.

"Q."

Q nearly vacated the platform where he was standing. "Bloody hell,

007!"

He swung round and gave the agent a withering look. "Do you EVER switch off the stealth mode? My cats make more noise than you in their sleep." His heart was hammering. "And I may be young, but not too young to die of a heart attack."

Hemmings was still on the comm, chuckling away. "I'll leave you two to it. I'll be dark for the next couple of hours, Q."

"Very well, 008. I'll be here when we resume contact." Q removed his headset and turned to face Bond, wondering for just how much of the interaction with Hemmings he'd been present.

"Cataclysmic Cosmic Occurrence returning equipment." Ah. Quite a bit of it then.

Bond placed the case next to Q's desk, the contents of which rattled slightly when they hit the platform. Q chose to gloss over his banter-filled exchange with Hemmings, opting to give Bond a hard time instead. "Well, that doesn't sound promising," he chided.

"Look on the bright side Q. Every time I bring back your toys damaged, it keeps you busy and out of the clutches of some persistent Double-O."

Q folded his arms and leaned back on his desk. "And what possible motive could you have for wanting to keep me out of the cluâ€ away from persistent Double-Os?"

Bond simply tilted his head. "You've been to Eton too I believe Q? Didn't they teach you Breaking Boundaries 101?"

And on that note, Bond, not waiting for Q to form a response, turned on his heel and strolled out, extracting his phone from his pocket as he walked away. Bond hit speed dial. It made two rings before his colleague answered. "Clare. I need a favourâ€|" he murmured.

Two hours later, Hemmings came back online and thirty minutes later, the mission was complete. "All done here, Quartermaster."

"Excellent work as always, 008." He cleared his throat. "Now. If that offer of dinner still standsâ€|"

Hemmings paused before responding. "What happened to maintaining professional boundaries, Q?"

"Oh I have every intention of maintaining those. I'd just enjoy watching you attempting to break them down," came the nonchalant response.

The smile in Hemmings voice was evident. "Don't think I won't hold you to that challenge on my return."

****Five Minutes Earlier****

Bond had made a promise to himself and he planned to keep it. As he strolled towards Q Division, pent up from his latest mission, he gave thought to his Quartermaster. Bolivia had been tough. To get him through, he'd had to imagine Q's voice in his ear, guiding,

directing, leading him to where he needed to be. And gotten him through it had. Barely. Now his next mission, back on British soil, was to thank him, hopefully in a demonstratively pleasant and welcome manner. The way a special agent was programmed to do. Dinner, followed by seduction. He wanted Q. He instinctively felt Q was interested in return. Despite his most stalwart attempts at hiding that interest. Dinner would be the means to break the icy, professional veneer that separated them.

Walking up the centre of Q-Branch, his eyes trained on the cardigan-covered back of the Quartermaster poised steady at his station, he nearly stepped upon the short but very present form of R, Q's pocket-sized secondhand. She was a whole other set of interesting that Bond didn't have time for right now, but the force of her presence stopped him in his tracks nonetheless. Who ever said size matters hadn't really spared thought to the shape of R landing in your path.

"007," she said, cool authority sounding through her words. "Welcome back. Is there something with which Q-Branch can assist you?"

Bond regarded her with a charm-infused smile. "If it's all the same to you, R, I'd prefer to report directly to the Quartermaster," attempting to side-step the girl. She mirrored the move.

"Q is indisposed at the moment, 007." Bond's eyes narrowed, glancing up at his station.

"Very well," he replied, turning to leave, only to take two steps and double-back. R, apparently, had been briefed on Bond's wily ways and quickly repositioned herself in his path.

Christ, it's like trying to run a gauntlet, he thought to himself. R was obviously in protective mode. Bond understood the feeling where Q was concerned. "Tanner said you would be difficult." She handed him a note. "Please read." With that she turned smoothly away from him and sat herself down at her desk without another word.

Bond read the note.

Dial it down, 007. Q's had some rather distressing news which M will fill you in on shortly. Tanner.

He folded it thoughtfully as he walked towards the station stealth-like so as not to interrupt him, and observed as he shepherded Hemmings through the next phase of his operation. He listened in amusement as they shared some insights on Bond's own personal style of espionage.

Bad news or not, Bond couldn't help but admire the consistent professional tenacity with which Q approached his work.

Still, Bond wouldn't be Bond if he didn't give a little poke. "Qâ€|"

â€|and was treated to the sight of Q fumbling in surprised shock, nearly dropping the pad he was holding.

As ordered, Bond kept the banter light and adhered to the request of his Chief-of-Staff. Insufferable bastard he may be in the field, but

he knew how to respect the needs of the men and women who kept him alive, when the occasion called for it.

He took his leave and headed back to his office to file his report, pulling out his phone as he strolled out. He hit speed dial. It made two rings before his colleague answered. "Clare. I need a favourâ€¦"

3. In Sickness & In Health: Part II

"I know you enjoy a challenge James, but taking on the Quartermaster might be a step too far. And what would M say?"

Bond and his female counterpart and companion for the evening, Clare Saunders, were strolling down Conduit Street, a particular destination set in their sights.

He responded in a tone that suggested he'd had prior experience. "M would probably roast my balls over a slow burning fire and then castrate me. But in this instance, what she doesn't know won't hurt her."

It was one of those rare occasions when 004 and 007 weren't on mission. 008 had returned from Barcelona earlier that day and was currently enjoying the company of his Quartermaster at their fore-promised dinner.

She sighed. "You know you owe me several times over for this."

"I absolutely appreciate your guile in extracting Q's whereabouts this evening, Clare," replied Bond with a smile. "I didn't realise R had such a crush on you. No wonder she was impervious to my charms."

004 gave him a sly sideways glance. "Mmmm. I must say, though my proclivities lie elsewhere, I do find her intriguing."

Bond chuckled. "Intriguing is a word when it comes to the Q-Branch boffins. I simply need to satisfy my curiosity that there is a minx behind those spectacles and a feast to behold beneath that cardiganâ€¦"

004's melodic laugh was genuine and light. "Just don't abuse the privilege, James. Assuming of course he's interested at all."

Bond didn't bother with a response to that, opening the door to the restaurant for his colleague. He was interested. It was just a matter of getting him to act on that interest.

While Clare spoke to the host to confirm their table, Bond employed his peripheral vision to scope out the patrons. He spotted Hemmings in almost the same moment he was spotted in return. Their eyes met and Hemmings stood to gesture them over. Q, who had his back to them, glanced over his shoulder at the approaching couple. His face was completely unreadable, as though the presence of another two Double-Os popping up in his vicinity was as normal an occurrence as Bond losing Q-Branch hardware.

Fascinating, thought Bond to himself.

"Well fancy meeting you two here," said Hemmings with a warm smile. "You haven't slipped a tracker on me have you, Clare?" he said, taking her hand for a kiss. "I might start to think you have genuine designs on me."

"Good grief, Lucas. You are simply far too easy a mark" she replied, eyes sparkling, "at least present me with something of a challenge."

"Won't you join us?" he asked, looking to Q for his agreement. "Unless you object, Q."

"Not at all," he said. "How could I possibly pass up the opportunity of being surrounded by such a wealth of MI6 experience?" picking up his wine glass, eyes shining with obvious mirth in the direction of Bond. Resuming their seats, Bond couldn't resist. "Very nice suit Q. Where are the training wheels?" leaning back to drink in the sight of him while their waiter poured some wine and distributed menus.

Q regarded him coolly. "If you're implying I don't look old enough to pull off the look, Bond"

"Oh you can pull off anything you like, Q," James deadpanned. Clare lifted her glass to her lips to conceal the slight smile.

Hemmings cleared his throat. "Entertaining as this is, gentlemen" It was in that moment both his and 004's phones chimed.

"Blast" he said, looking at the text demanding his person at MI6. "What spectacularly poor timing. Oh well, duty calls."

"And for myself also," said Clare rising from her chair. They beckoned the waiter for their coats. "I'm sorry, Q. Another time?" Hemmings asked, ghosting a featherlike touch over his shoulder.

"Of course," he said, standing himself, "we were just getting started before the" interruption," he said, decidedly not looking in Bond's direction.

He pulled on his overcoat, while looking at Bond. "I take it I can rely on you to see our Quartermaster home safely, Bond? And keep his honour intact?"

Bond tilted his head once. "I'll do my best, Hemmings."

Hemmings sidled up to him as he headed for the door. "That, 007, is exactly what I'm afraid of."

Q scoffed as he resumed his seat, folding his hands calmly in front of him and crossing his legs. "He can try. He's trying in most other endeavours."

God, this was going to be fun, thought Bond, keeping his eyes on Q, barely registering the departure of the agents.

"Is that a gauntlet I hear landing at my feet?" he asked, taking a position opposite Q across their table.

Q smiled with the confidence of a man who knew his resolve could not

be broken.

We'll see about that, thought James.

"Bring it on, Commander Bond."

* * *

><p>"007â€|"<p>

"Invite me in, Q."

"Thisâ€" This isâ€"

"This," said Bond, against the warm, inviting lips of his superior, "is wasting precious time, when we could be decidedly more warm, more comfortable and more naked on the other side of that door."

"Sex, Bond, no matter how good itâ€" it mightâ€| Christ, you're good at that," he shuddered breathlessly.

"I haven't even begun to broach the meaning of that word Q, and the many permutations its definition can take," he mouthed against his jaw, moving slowly down the side of his neck. He leaned back to give Q his most devastating look of want. "Unless you'll permit me."

Q only considered himself at his most intelligent and coherent when bloodflow was heading in the right direction. At this moment however, said flow had determined it was going South for a little holiday just below the Equator of Planet Q. "Permission granted, 007," Q whispered, before Bond unhesitatingly relinquished his throat in favour of his mouth, while pushing him backwards through his front door.

Suit jackets and shoes divested, Q slowed his motions and Bond, ever present in such moments, mirrored the motion in kind. "I'm saying this now, so there is no misunderstanding."

"I'm listening," murmured Bond, focussed on undoing his shirt buttons.

Q took a deep breath. "I've lost something. Something important to me."

"I am aware," Bond replied, returning his attention to Q's shoulder.

"So full disclosure. You are aware this is nothing more than rebound sex," he whispered, eyes slipping shut, his body surrendering to the feel of lips and hands roaming skin that had long since been in need of attention. "Nothing can come of tonight. Promise me."

Bond nodded, pulling him into his living room and onto the sofa to straddle Q above him. "One night. Nothing more. I promiseâ€|" he whispered, dragging him down to meet soft, yielding lips in an all-consuming kiss that left both men wondering at how foolish and empty a promise can be.

Because everyone knows, all too well. Promises? They're made to be broken.

4. Til Death Do Us Part: Part I

"Promise, Bond. Swear on your honour as an agent," Q exhaled, Bond moving above him, bodily pushing stolen air from straining lungs.

Bond didn't consider himself much a man of honour where a promise made in the heat of shared lust was concerned, but breathing the raw, faintly metallic aroma of his Quartermaster, his senses filled with the sounds and smells of their long overdue union, he would have promised him the stars.

That, at the very least, was a vow he could keep.

* * *

><p>The sun was shining bright and clear in the Autumn sky. In stark contrast, the mood of the small crowd gathered around the open grave below its blue expanse held dark and sombre vigil. It's not every day you bury the Chief of the SIS, gunned down in the frontline of duty she had no business being in the front of. Taken to her fate by her best agent, the vengeful demon of her past led to them by her chosen Quartermaster.<p>

Q stood by the graveside. Her casket was simple, the funeral similarly so. Olivia Mansfield. As pragmatic in death as she was in life. Flanking his left and right shoulders were Bill Tanner and his Q-Branch righthand girl, R.

He couldn't help but wonder what life at MI6 would be like without the old bat looking over his shoulder. He glanced over the grave at his new superior and his assistant. Gareth Mallory was looking pensively into the half-distance, but Eve Moneypenny, Mallory's PA, caught his eye. The old (well, figuratively speaking) guard and the new guard sized each other up briefly before turning their attentions back to the burial ceremony.

He didn't even notice when it came to an end and those in attendance began to drift away. "Coming, Q?" Bill asked. "There's to be a small gathering of senior staff at one of the safe houses."

He nodded absently. "Yes. I'll be along. Just a few minutes more." Bill nodded and turned to leave him to his thoughts. "I'll text you the address. See you there then."

The crowd dissipated but Q remained, eyes shut, head bowed in silent thought. He hadn't noticed the man standing some yards away by the nearby trees, watching.

He didn't notice still, when the same man approached to stand across from him over the gaping hole in the ground and James Bond made his presence felt when he finally chose to speak.

"She recruited me personally, you know."

Q startled from his thoughts. He took in the sight of their most prized asset in the Double-O division distractedly.

"I did not know." Seems this was a moment for sharing. "As it happens, she recruited me as well."

The silence hung between them. The sense of death in which they had both played a part hung there too, waiting for acknowledgement.

"Any regrets?" Bond asked.

Q tilted his head back to look at the sky and squinted in annoyance at the brightness of the sun. "Fucking shitloads," he exhaled, burying his hands deeper in his pockets.

Bond tossed the lily he had been holding in his hand onto her casket and walked around the grave to meet him. "Then I suggest we go and get shit-faced with a view to burying those regrets along with the woman I failed."

Q nodded numbly. "We failed, 007." Q looked into the gaping earth. "Though somehow I think she wouldn't have wanted to die any other way but on her feet."

Turning to follow Bond, they departed from the side of their illustrious leader for the last time.

* * *

><p>Q was on his third Scotch. Bond, on his fourth vodka martini.<p>

"I absolutely do not believe that you told the Head of MI6 to fuck off in the middle of a mission," Q laughed.

"I absolutely did," replied Bond, glad to have dragged the man out of his distracted frame of mind. Swirling the remaining liquid, he momentarily slipped further back into his rare visited former life, his other self pre-MI6, in which Olivia Mansfield had stood back and let him act out in all manner of teenage angst ridden ways, dispelling the anger and grief out of his system, before she sat him down and gave him the choice that would determine the rest of his life.

Blue pill or red pill, he thought to himself, sipping his cocktail. Down the rabbit hole he had fallen. He dragged himself back to the present and looked across at his drinking companion who it appeared had also taken a detour to wonderland.

"I don't hold out much hope for her replacement," grouched Bond, dragging Q himself back to the present with him.

"Don't be so sure," replied Q. "You know, he caught Tanner and I helping you on your way to Skyfall? We're all complicit in her death in some way. Just glad we didn't lose you into the bargain as well," he said, clinking his glass to Bond's.

"Humph," came the Neanderthal response. "Couldn't imagine the world without me in it, eh Q?"

"I'd be out of a job if you didn't keep destroying my toys. The perpetual cycle of destructive creation that you and I inhabit keeps us both off the streets. Unfortunately, we're fucking stuck with each

other."

"United by a dead womanâ€|"

"â€| May she rest in peace."

"Every fucking person I love ends up on a slab," Bond mumbled into his glass. With the exception of you, he mused to himself. So far, came the unwelcome words appending themselves to that thought.

Q's eyes narrowed. He wasn't accustomed to the raw honesty on display. Death can be a sobering experience no matter how drunk you try to get, he supposed. M, Vesper, his parentsâ€| Bond was a perfect example of how much shit the world could throw in your direction and how often you could get up and knock it all off if you had half a mind to do such.

His thoughts turned to the other display of raw honesty he had witnessed back at his house, the night Bond had dropped him home. Bond had been true to his word but the experience had affected Q in a way he had not foreseen and despite several intimate liaisons since, nothing had come close to the experience of that one night.

His curiosity and perhaps one too many got the better of him. "That timeâ€| At my houseâ€| After the LeChiffre mission. Were you interested because I reminded you of her? Trying to recapture those memories?" Bond stared at him, no doubt wondering from where the left-of-field question had come. "I mean, I don't mind if that's the case," he mumbled. "Quite flattering I supposeâ€|"

"Ridiculous boy," huffed Bond, knocking back the contents of his glass. "I was not with you that night, nor here with you now because you remind me of her."

Q frowned. He'd been so sure.

Bond's eyes held that raw truth again, unmistakably recognisable because it was so rare. "I fell for her because she reminded me of you."

They looked away from each other. Bond, evidently had decided to go for broke. "Vesper was that echo of what I wanted but couldn't have. Ever since we first met. And when you finally conceded me one fucking incredible night, I took what you were willing to give, hoping it would be enough to sustain me. That it would be enough. But you. Hearing you during every mission, seeing you after every mission. It's bloody maddening not being able to touch you, to hold you. Fuck you into the oblivion you so frequently bring me back from. Of course it wasn't bloody enough."

Q remained stock still for a time, slowly releasing a breath he hadn't realised he'd been holding while allowing Bond's revelations to seep into his consciousness. His brain processes had been put on momentary hold and he truly had no response. So he stood from his stool at the bar and provided the only coherent thought occupying his mind in that moment.

"Well. That's torn it."

Logic and sensibility certainly took a strange turn when faced with

one's mortality. Funerals tended to have that effect.

Bond watched his reflection while Q took out his wallet and paid for their drinks. He returned the storm-blue stare in the mirror behind the bar, apparently coming to a decision. He faced Bond, shoving his hands into his overcoat. "Twenty minutes. The Ambassador across the street. I'll text you the room number." And with that he strolled out.

Bond ordered another drink.

And passed what were possibly the longest twenty minutes of his life previewing the many and varied plans he had for his Quartermaster.

5. Til Death Do Us Part: Part II

Bond pushed the door ajar to see Q standing by the tall window overlooking its London vista. He gently clicked the door shut and studied his silhouette against the late afternoon sky. His slender frame belied the true strength held by Q's body, having been on the receiving end over the course of a night spent beneath it, a night he had been unable and unwilling to chase from his mind. Bond took a slow, easy breath, causing a slight shift in Q's stance. The tilt of his head to the side, bringing his features into profile, allowed Bond a moment to admire before stepping towards him. He stopped half a foot away from him, behind him, sliding off his jacket while taking in the view over his shoulder in which Q was absorbed.

"Why do we do it to ourselves, Bond? Why do we put ourselves through all the pain for a nation who will never know the sacrifices we make for them?"

Bond raised a hand and traced the curve of his spine with his knuckles. Q sighed, an invitation. Bond moved closer to bring his chest flush with his back, allowing a hand to rest light but undemanding on his hip.

"We do it, Q, because no one else can. No one else will."

Q reached down to grab the hand, dragging it along his belly to wrap fully around his waist.

"So Commander Bond," though he couldn't see his expression, his tone hinted melancholic amusement. "You've lost something important to you. Is this your rebound sex?"

Bond gave some due consideration to the observation. "I hadn't actually considered this in those terms. I am, in fact, slightly surprised by this turn of events. You seemed so resistant to my advances," his lips moving softly against the steadily increasing pulse point of Q's slender neck. "Would it bother you if that were the case?"

"No. Seems only fair. And as for resistance to your advances? Well. I had to make you work for the prize. I'm not some cat easily swayed by the appearance of a bag of treats. Regardless how tempting said bag of treats may appear."

Bond chuckled, slipping into the easy banter and camaraderie he so relished exchanging with his young and delectable superior.

Q sobered the moment. "Why did you come back, James? You could have stayed dead," he whispered.

"I came back for many reasons. Some, important. Some less so. In the grand scheme of things. I told myself I didn't have a choice. I am defined by my duty. M made sure of that." Bond untucked Q's shirt from the side of his trousers, fingers gaining access to smooth, firm skin.

"But all those reasons aside, there was one constant. In all the truths, and lies and shadows, there was one real, solid, tangible memory." He firmed his grip on Q's waist to turn him round to face each other, his hand sliding up beneath the fabric of his shirt to pull him close. "A man, my Quartermaster, wrapped in my arms who gave his body to me for one night. One unforgettable night where I felt fragments of myself find each other again. Take shape into something a little less broken, a little more whole." Eyes locked, Q leaned closer, lips almost touching, memories rekindling the ambers of a fire that had never been fully extinguished, still glowing despite their time apart. "I came back, because I realised that I needed to complete that memory and snare his mind as well."

Difficult as it was to accept that a second first kiss could be as all-consuming as the first, Q understood their time apart had changed them. In truth, he knew every kiss was a first kiss. Such was guaranteed by the passage of time, shaped by experience, cells in our body dying and reborn second by second. "One taste. That was all it took," whispered Bond, teasing lips apart. "I had to have more. Have it all. Unlock the secrets hiding beneath those dark, chaotic waves, hoping that would bring order to my own chaos."

"You are the embodiment of chaos, James. I'm really not sure I'm the person for the job. It's challenging enough keeping you alive."

"M knew what she was doing when she brought us together, Q. Knew my needs. Understood me better than I understand myself."

Bond leaned back then, to look at him more fully, as though the sight of him could fill a yearning soul. "Everything about you is so beautiful. Even your spots," he said playfully.

"Mmmm. Maybe we could use the bumps on my skin to fill in some of those wrinkles on your face, old man?"

"My wrinkles speak of character and experience," Bond replied, mock sternly.

"Wrinkles? Those crevasses would give some fault lines along the Pacific Rim a run for their money."

"You're not too old for a spanking, Quartermaster. I think a firm hand might be in order."

"Go ahead and give it your best shot!" he began, James grabbing him around his waist, whilst in one fluid move twisting them both around and hitching his foot behind Q's ankle unbalancing him so that he tumbled all legs and arms onto the bed.

Splayed and unresistant, Q opened himself to the needs of the man above him. "We spoke about you a lot, you know."

"Mmmm?" hummed Bond, trailing fingers down his compact form to rest on his hips.

"She said - and I quote: "He's a stubborn little shit and bloody hard work but he's worth the effort. I'm relying on you to make the effort."

"Crafty old bitch," Bond said coolly, pulling down Q's suit trousers. He could hardly be surprised at the revelation. M had known his parents, he suspected she had loved his father. Once. A personal interest in his own future was to be expected. That she'd recognised the importance and added value of Q to him was testament to how well she understood him. He was silently grateful someone did. Apparently, she believed their Quartermaster would too.

Attention rapt on the responses of Q's body to his touch, Bond watched him worry his lip, adding to the swelling already there.

"I think I should take care of that, don't you?"

"Take care of what?" Q asked distractedly. Bond's hands, never letting up their maddeningly sensual attentions, placed one to the side of Q's head, before leaning down to trap that lip between his own for a few moments, taking care and consideration in each move designed to break him down bodily piece by piece, caress after caress.

"And what else did you discuss?" he enquired, not permitting Q to catch his breath.

"Certainly not how well versed you were in the anatomy of a coâ€"!"

"Jesus bloody hell!" he groaned, twisting his hips beneath the gentle force of a skilled hand.

"Tell me," said Bond.

Q recovered his soon-to-be disembodied faculties long enough to sit up and push Bond's shirt away from his body and roll him over. The agent yielded unresisting.

He straddled him but made no move to touch. "Quoting again: "Despite those annoying human flaws with which he is burdened, 007 is a highly compartmentalised individual. Hothead, philanderer, vagabond, fiendâ€"!" He trailed off with a small smile, sitting back to strip the remains of Bond's clothing from his body, descending upon him with a purpose reserved for those missions he knew would yield the most promising results.

"Flattery will get you anywhere you want to go," murmured Bond, gaze fixed on Q's own as he progressed downwards, dodging scars and fading bruises.

Bond grabbed him and dragged him up his body again to face each other before reaching his intended destination. Rolling them both onto

their sides, they wrapped themselves around each other, kisses soft but wanton, firm but gentle, in a world that was anything but those things. The men slipped together with all the ease of a handgun slotting into its holster.

"Where do you want to go with this, Q?" Bond asked, eyes bright, shining with sincerity.

Q took a moment to consider his answer, kissing the agent in much the same way he did most things in his life. With utter conviction to the task. He broke from his assault on Bond's mouth and was gratified to be greeted by the look of a man on the verge of a need only the man opposite could satisfy.

"To the Gates of Hell if need be," he whispered, relocating his body beneath Bond's again, "and when the fires consume us, Jamesâ€¦ Then we will wield the flames."

And long after the London sunset seared its skyline, their shared flames of passion burned into the night, dancing against each other in a contortion of heat, sweat and desire. Bond knew then, as did Q, Hell's fire itself wouldn't stand a chance against them, its fury a pale light compared to the legacy of a soldier left in the hands of her best agent and her stalwart Quartermaster.

****END****

End
file.